



Christmas Greetings

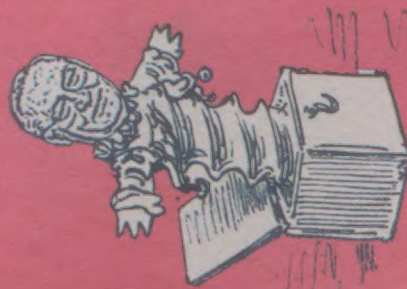
from Our Voice

Painting: Christopher J. Moore

OUR VOICE



Starring:
The amazing
"Stan-in-the-Box"



THE KVELINES WHO IS STOMAS



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Photo: Pieter de Vos

Out in the cold

rates at the lower end have been less than one percent for the past year. Average rents for a one bedroom apartment are nearing \$600/month, which is well over 50 percent of what a person working full-time in an \$8/hour job would earn.

Federal and provincial funding to assist with the construction of low-income rental housing has been almost non-existent for nine years. The Alberta government's reductions alone amount to more than \$200 million over this time. Meanwhile the population of Edmonton has grown rapidly and the strong economy has meant that builders have focused on the profitable upper end of the market. It is estimated that in the period from 1997-2000, 6500 units of rental housing were lost to the market due to conversions for sale and demolitions -- to further complicate the crisis.

"If MPs and MLAs had to try to survive with an income below \$15,000 a year, as is true of one-third of Edmonton renters, paying half or more of their whole income just for a roof over their heads, they might start to care more about this crisis," says ECOHH member Jim Gurnett.

"When there is no affordable place to rent, poor people are going to be jamming into emergency shelters and those for whom this level of accommodation is all that is possible are going to end up in the river valley or breaking into garages or crashing with friends and families until the whole group is evicted by the landlord," explains Devam.

As concern with homelessness has received more public attention the past few years all three levels of government have committed some money to it. In Edmonton this has meant there are now 106 more shelter spaces than at the time of the last count in 2000 and other

spaces have been improved in quality. But the identified need for more than 5000 units of low-rent affordable housing has received no attention. Waiting lists for units in Capital Region Housing Corporation are two years long.

"For every person counted on October 23 there are many more living in unsafe, unhealthy, insecure, overpriced and inadequate housing," Devam declares. "Governments can't come up with small amounts of money for homelessness and think the real problem is being addressed. We need a large investment in decent inexpensive housing, not just a few dollars for emergency needs."

"The same weekend the count was announced thousands of Edmontonians could afford to spend \$340 for a pair of tickets to the Grey Cup. But for a person on welfare or a low-paying job it would be a hardship to pay that much for a month's rent. It's time to recognize a shared responsibility for these members of our community," Gurnett challenges.

"People are dying on mattresses in the cold, children are having to move in and out of four or five schools a year, newly arrived immigrants eager to work don't have a place to get presentable for a job interview or to call employers from, ordinary folks don't have a private place to socialize quietly with a friend—these are the simple terrible details of homelessness in our city. It is a judgement on all of us that we do not rise up and insist this catastrophe be addressed."

Edmonton Joint Planning Committee on Housing conducted the count and results were announced at a rally that was part of National Housing Day of Action. The full report is available at www.ehtf.ca.

OV Staff

1,915 Homeless in Edmonton - A 65% Increase

People gathered in the cold wind on the Milner Library Plaza recently were presented with disturbing statistics about the growth of homelessness in Edmonton.

On October 23, 1915 homeless people were identified in the city. One thousand, two hundred and thirteen of these were absolutely homeless—with no housing alternative for that day—and 702 were in emergency shelters.

The last count, two years ago, found 1160 homeless people and the three counts previous to that found from 836 to 1125 people.

"A 65% increase since the last count makes me sick," says Sundari Devam, President of the Edmonton Coalition on

Housing and Homelessness (ECOHH). "It is hard to know how anyone in government can sleep when this is happening in one of the wealthiest cities in the world."

The count total includes 267 children under the age of 15 years, 133 youths aged 15 to 18 and 157 seniors.

Not included in the count total were 148 people turned away by shelters and other housing providers on the count day nor 120 people released from treatment centres, jails and hospitals on that day. Assuming many of these people would also have been without housing the total could have exceeded 2000 people.

"Homelessness is the tip of a tremendously destructive iceberg," Devam explains. "When governments abandon their responsibilities for housing, a process is set in motion that has huge consequences."

Many people who are homeless or living in emergency shelters have some income but are not able to find inexpensive places to rent. Edmonton's vacancy

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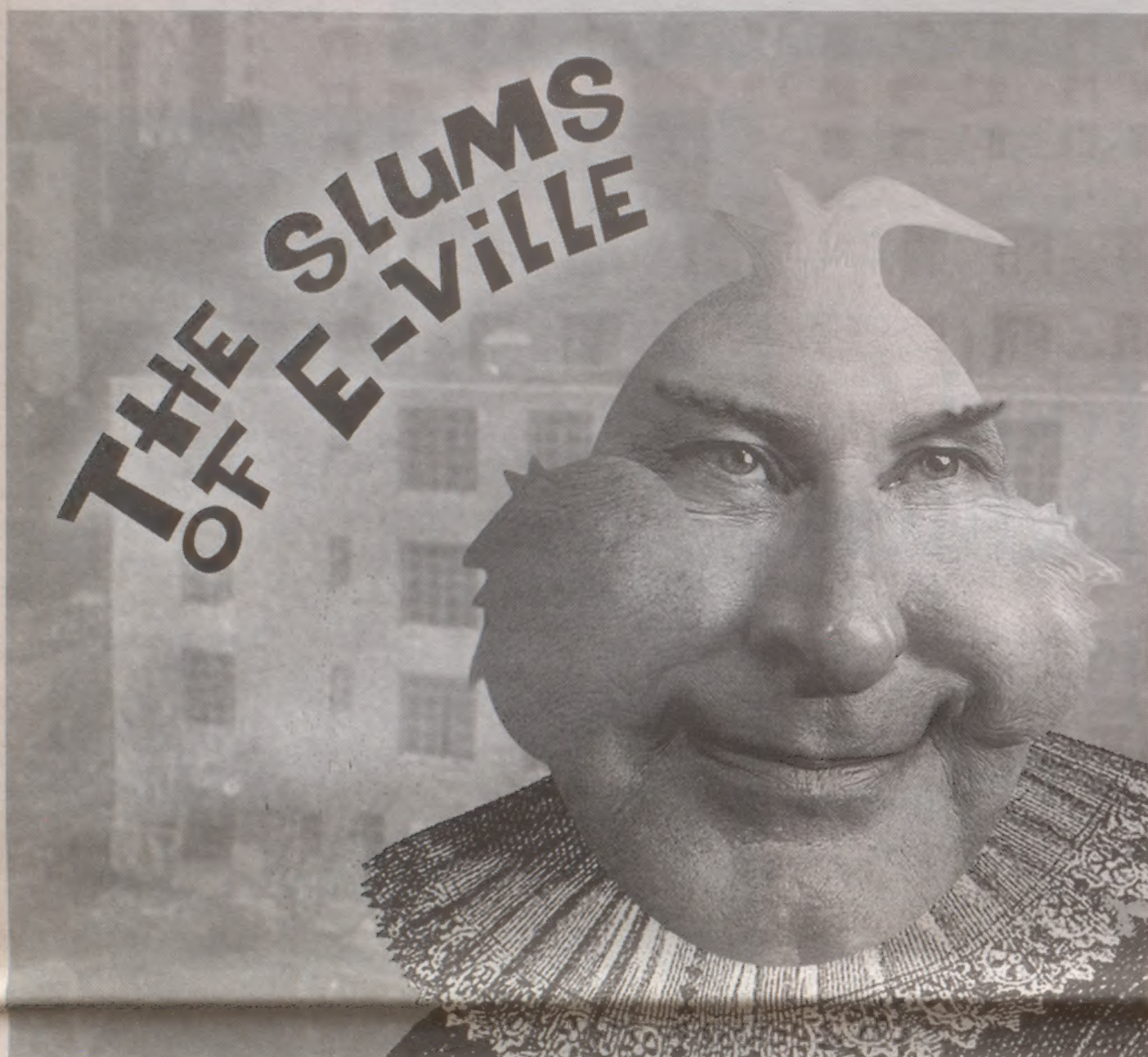
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YOU'RE A MEAN ONE...



It is almost a year to the day that Ralph Klein made his late night visit to the Herb Jamieson Mens Shelter in Edmonton. The event that could and should have sparked intense debate about the Klein government's approach to issues of poverty and homelessness (an approach remarkably similar in both simplicity and disrespect to the slurred late-night words of the Premier, ie "Get a job!") instead turned into Klein's public confession of his own alcoholism. Both the Alberta media and public gathered the tearful Premier to it's collective breast in a fit of compassion rarely shown to the homeless addict or, for that matter, anyone else living in poverty in Alberta.

The issues facing the men who bore the brunt of Klein's outburst were largely ignored. The fact that his fellow Albertans were sleeping on the floor in the lobby of a Men's Shelter while Klein himself was on his way home from a party barely received a passing glance. The reality that Klein's own political philosophy and the policies that spring from it is in large part responsible for keeping these men where they are was drowned in the flood of goodwill that poured out on the weeping Premier.

It has never been the nature of Our Voice to kick a man when he's down, but a year has passed since The Troubles, and while the Premier seems to be in fine form, fighting for the cause of global destruction in the name of big business, the Herb Jamieson Shelter is still over-flowing with men who have nowhere else to call home.

What has the Klein government done in the interim to address the situation their leader stumbled into and out of so blithely on December 12, 2001? The answer is nothing. But let me elaborate...

Actually, as I write this it's midnight... midnight of the night before the morning the paper has to be at the printer. I have been sitting in front of this page for hours trying to force myself elaborate, trying to wrap my head one more time around the realities of poverty in this province. I don't think I can do it.

Christmas is coming, and Christmas is a very special time. For me it is the celebration of the day the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. It is the time to remember the day Light entered the world. I don't think even Premier Klein can steal the powerful beauty of that reality.

Oh, he is a mean one, to be sure. He hoards what is not rightfully his, while children go to bed hungry. He bulldozes along, convinced of his power, keeping the world safe for greenhouse gases and wealthy oil men. He ignores the cry of the poor, while he indulges the demands of the well-to-do. He definitely is a mean one.

But it is difficult for me to think about Klein for very long, the way it might be difficult for a field hand to think about the plantation owner sitting comfortably on the veranda, or a stockman at Wal-Mart to think about Sam Walton sailing in his

yacht. My existence in some small way gives him what he has, yet I am as insignificant to him as the poppy seed he picks from between his teeth after consuming his morning muffin.

Luckily, I believe in a God who turns everything upside down, a God who spent more time with the poor and outcast than he did with the rich and powerful; a God who said, "the first shall be last, and the last shall be first." Luckily, I believe in a God who lived here with us, who shared our struggles, a God who showed us how to be with one another, how to be truly human.

So it is a relief, after pondering too long on the tendencies of Ralph, to turn my thoughts for a moment to the upcoming celebration of the birth of my God. It is reassuring to know that as mean as Ralph is, there is no way that he can steal Christmas.

It is now one thirty in the morning, and I have to admit, I'm tired. I'm going home to bed, content in the knowledge that somewhere nearby Ralph is sleeping under the same sky and the same eternally loving, watchful eyes as I will be soon. I hope he has a merry Christmas, and I hope that somewhere in his heart, which is two sizes too small, he will find the will to use his power to change the world for the better.

I can dream, can't I?

Natasha Laurence

You're a mean one, Mr. Grinch.
You really are a heel.
You're as cuddly as a cactus,
You're as charming as an eel, Mr. Grinch.
You're a bad banana
With a greasy black peel.

You're a monster, Mr. Grinch.
Your heart's an empty hole.
Your brain is full of spiders,
You have garlic in your soul, Mr. Grinch.
I wouldn't touch you, with a
thirty-nine-and-a-half foot pole.

You're a vile one, Mr. Grinch.
You have termites in your smile.
You have all the tender sweetness
Of a seasick crocodile, Mr. Grinch.
Given the choice between the two of you
I'd take the seasick crocodile.

You're a foul one, Mr. Grinch.
You're a nasty, wasty skunk.
Your heart is full of unwashed socks
Your soul is full of gunk, Mr. Grinch.
The three words that best describe you
are as follows, and I quote:
"Stink. Stank. Stunk."

Dr. Seuss, 1957

EEL E

POLITICIAN, n. An eel in the fundamental mud upon which the superstructure of organized society is reared. When he wriggles he mistakes the agitation of his tail for the trembling of the edifice. As compared with the statesman, he suffers the disadvantage of being alive.

AMBROSE BIERCE

Oh, he is a mean one, to be sure. He hoards what is not rightfully his, while children go to bed hungry. He bulldozes along, convinced of his power, keeping the world safe for greenhouse gases and wealthy oil men. He ignores the cry of the poor, while he indulges the demands of the well-to-do. He definitely is a mean one.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



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Hungry Eyes

L LETTER

A letter is an unannounced visit, and the postman is the intermediary of impolite surprises. Every week we ought to have one hour for receiving letters, and then go and take a bath.

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

I am tired and hungry. Let me tell you why. Let me tell you of our beloved Welfare System: a system that is supposedly intended to help people become independent but, in fact, systematically grinds the very poor into despair, alcoholism, crime, poor health, prostitution, starvation and the streets. Look about you. See all the panhandlers; one of these tomorrows, I may be one of them — if I don't die from malnutrition first.

I trusted the system and where has it got me? Child Welfare, which is supposed to protect children, stole my son from me. They said I neglected my children, that they were developmentally retarded. They coerced me into signing papers giving them my son. I signed because I thought it was the only way to save my two girls. My son was dyslexic. They didn't get my girls because I had proof that they were developmentally advanced. I fought for my girls for all their childhood. Time and time again I had Child Welfare on my back. Now the girls are grown they have started another attack.

Because I spent eighteen years being there for my children, I have no work experience. Because I have hearing loss, not bad enough to apply for AISH, I cannot hold a waitress job. Because of my eyesight (I'm legally blind without glasses, but I'm not eligible for AISH), several other jobs are not for me. Because of a back injury suffered in my teens, which I can't prove, I can't handle jobs requiring a lot of heavy lifting.

Meanwhile, I search desperately for a job. I took upgrading, learned computers, have my name in every temp office I can find. I haunt Canada Place and the library and I slowly starve.

Why starve? Look at rents. My rent goes up to \$620 after December. I only get \$615. On that I am expected to pay rent (\$495 at this time), pay power (average \$20 per month), buy a bus pass (\$55), groceries (\$100), cat food and litter (\$40). Yes, I have two cats. If they were my children, I wouldn't be expected to give them up, but because they're cats — whom I love — I am

expected to abandon them or have them put down; something I refuse to do.

So, if you see me out there one of these days, panhandling, you'll know why. All my life I have fought to avoid this but it's coming down to that or prostitution and I'm not completely crazy yet.

Susan Kerr

Food Fighters

I pick up the "Our Voice" paper from Kevin, who is posted by the Stanley Milner Library. I try to give him as much of a donation as I can because I'm on AISH also, due to a degenerative disc disease and scoliosis.

Your November 2002 edition with the well-written article "The Fight for Food" really tore me apart as I just barely avoided becoming one of the homeless and facing the probable outcome of selling myself on the street to survive.

Depending on soup lines, food banks, pop can collections, etc. is a disgrace in Canada. Never being able to put down roots but having to pull up stakes every so often because of rising rents and slum landlords who are only out to exploit the poor is time-consuming, costly and emotionally draining.

As I look around at all that has happened to me in the past, I feel like Tevye in "Fiddler on the Roof" who, day and night, must scramble for a living, feed a wife and children and say his daily prayers. The greatest line in that movie was from "If I Were a Rich Man." "It's no shame to be poor but it's no great honor either. So what would have been so terrible if I were a wealthy man and had a small fortune?"

Yes, self-fulfillment and lifestyle change take second place to survival when every day is a struggle just to meet basic needs.

In closing, I can only go on giving as much as can be given every month to the "Our Voice" paper vendor or by donation to the paper directly.

Lucy R. Olson



Photo: Pieter de Vos

"It's no shame to be poor but it's no great honor either. So what would have been so terrible if I were a wealthy man and had a small fortune?"

Fiddler on the Roof

Postcards from the Edge

Enclosed please find two signed cards from my husband and myself for your Housing Crisis Campaign. We are both in our eighties, so not perhaps as vigorous as we would like to be in addressing such issues. However, after hearing what happened when our premier addressed a man returning to one of our

men's shelters after a shift at work, with no home to go to except for a shelter, we feel that we must at least make some effort.

Every reform must start somewhere. There must be some other people, like us, who have experienced hardships in their lives and now perhaps have one vacant room or suite that they would be willing to

share with someone who is trying desperately to get ahead in life.

Of course, there would be risks on both sides, but people who are working with the poor would be able to evaluate these risks and perhaps make a registry of sorts, listing the requirements and capabilities of these people to pay a fee to cover light and water

until they improve their lot and are able to get housing of their own.

If enough people responded, this would free up the shelters for those who are unemployed, since we don't seem to have any money to build shelters.

Effie Hobden

"The amazing Stan-in-the-box"



We Were There... Where Was Stan?

Three months ago the Edmonton Coalition on Housing and Homelessness together with Our Voice launched a postcard campaign aimed at the provincial government. We wanted the Minister responsible for low-income housing, Stan Woloshyn, to know that people in Alberta care about their neighbors struggling to find adequate housing. We wanted him to know that Albertans believed in providing the most basic of human rights - the right to shelter - to everyone, rich or poor, in this province. We wanted him to see the faces of some of the people affected by his government's policies.

We wanted him to listen and respond.

During the three months of the campaign, the response was overwhelming. Thousands of people from across Alberta got involved in distributing, signing, collecting and returning the cards. Housewives from Ft. McMurray, elderly couples in Grande Cache, homeless people in Calgary, professionals in Health Care, education, and social work, children, new immigrants, third generation Canadians, Tories, Liberals and New Democrats all expressed their desire to see the government act quickly to address the affordable housing crisis. The Catholic Women's League distributed the cards all across rural Alberta. The U of A Students Union took the cards to the student body. Countless hours of volunteer time and effort went into the campaign, all of it motivated by a desire for basic social justice.

Over those three months 6,200 cards were returned. (More are arriving at our office daily - they will be forwarded to the Minister.) That number of cards over that time period is equal to 66 phone calls per

day, seven days a week, to Minister Woloshyn's office. It is an effort and a voice that should not be ignored.

Unfortunately, the Minister does not see it that way. Early in the campaign he was invited to be present at the vigil on November 22, the National Day of Housing and Homelessness, to receive the cards addressed to him and to speak to the issue. And up until two days before the appointed time he office assured us he would do just that.

Instead, two days before the event, the Minister withdrew his commitment with no explanation. Something - it is unclear what - had come up. His office assistants are unsure what he was doing instead - a mystery apparently too deep to fathom - and the Minister himself is much, much too busy to speak to us.

The event went on as planned. Backbencher Julius Jankowski attended in Woloshyn's stead and the cards were sent back with him into the echoing void that is the Conservative government.

Does it matter that Woloshyn didn't show? Does it matter that he failed to recognize the effort and concerns of the people? For where I sit, it matters a great deal. It is this type of action on the part of elected officials that leads to despair. It is this type of disrespect that leads to apathy. It is this type of ivory-tower politics that leads to the belief that we, the people, really are at the mercy of a system beyond our control.

Stan Woloshyn is just one man, but his actions on this day further reinforced the growing belief in the minds of thousands of Albertans that the government he is part of doesn't give a damn about human suffering.

Natasha Laurence

Go Figure?

With Edmonton being the number one contender for the fourth low-income city in the country, it's not surprising in the capital of poverty that out of 8,000 bankruptcies in Alberta, 4,600 poverty-stricken people will now bring their children up in poverty.

Notwithstanding, more than half of these families will eventually become dependent on food banks, outreach centres and other charities for keeping their families together. Every social agency in the country reports that most of these families will wind up in divorce where hundreds will become caught up in the cycle of addictions and crime.

Although everyone's perception of poverty varies from person to person, every civilization known and yet to become still remains poorly educated to the causes and effects of poverty. With everyone struggling and rushing around to create their own poverty, Edmontonians are caught in participating to propagate the ideas and philosophies of criminal criminology. This means

that with the high cost of living and the high rate of poverty you will commit a crime in maintaining and securing a livelihood.

Today, 95% of people 65 and over are considered broke, disabled or require some form of assistance. It's a tragedy of democracy that the unwanted people of Canada would have to resort to crime after spending their lives struggling and saving for their retirements. It's the end of Canadian unity where a woman in her seventies was arrested for shoplifting \$500 worth of meat products. It's also a shame to watch a grandmother steal a sweater for her three-year-old grandson or the old-timer trying to run out of the liquor store with a bottle of Jack Daniels.

It is strongly suggested that those persons 65 and over account for most shoplifting occurrences, although theft is common amongst all age groups for the lack of, or other reasons.

With 80% of all politicians being lawyers or accountants. Before turning 65, ask yourself this, how it is possible that, with our legislation with the availability of resources, reasonable intelligence with the strength of law and public interest, cause such a disjunction of civil liberties of human rights of

law with the common laws of constitutional duty.

As the next generation of elderly reach retirement, they will also be witness to higher rents, continuous bills, various types of abuses and violence. It's unfortunate, while the elderly are out selling their prescription drugs and shoplifting in our city's malls, while trying to live on a fixed income. The people we call Grandma and Grandpa face the odds of having their homes broke into or offenses of property damage.

Without malice, the total arrogance and ignorance displayed by our elected officials at all levels is exploitive in its development of social infrastructure and justice. As each politician turns his back to accept the state of human poverty and administrate the care and social justice required by the elderly, the working poor, the disabled and the homeless, is guilty of Canada's constitution to seek to make the environment safe.

The problems we face as a people in closing the gap between the high cost of living and those living below the poverty line are that our Federal law enforcement and your right to seek and maintain a livelihood don't coincide.

Dale Ferris

Working Together...

All my life I have surrounded myself with people I can count on, both in my personal life and, whenever possible, at work. At Bissell Centre we strive to work as a team; when a crisis situation occurs all the staff respond. When, as sometimes happens, the situation escalates beyond the staff's control, the police are called. If possible the officers who respond are the officers who work in the community, our "beat cops".

Constable Tony Parrotta, Constable Dwayne Hunter, Constable Tom Paton and his partner are the "beat cops" we have come to know and appreciate. They work with Bissell Centre and the surrounding community. The "beat cops" have built relationships with the staff, meeting with us at regular staff meetings as needed and attending meetings with staff and community members when concerns arise.

Recently I was walking with Constable Dwayne Hunter on one of his visits to the Centre and I was immediately impressed by the number of people he knows on a first name basis. Everyone smiled and chatted with him as we walked through the Drop-In. While talking to Drop-in staff, Dwayne was approached by one of the regulars who told him that he had been working on controlling his anger and was really trying to be good on the streets. Just before leaving Bissell Centre, Dwayne ran into an individual I hadn't seen before. They chatted briefly and, because he appeared somewhat shocked as the man moved off, I asked him why. Dwayne told me: "That was the best conversation I've had with that gentleman since working in this area".

The staff at Bissell Centre contact the "beat cops" frequently to handle police matters program participants are struggling with or just to ask for advice. The other day an individual came through intake and while talking about his dissatisfaction with the health system, he made threats against a hospital and another health facility. The staff member called both health facilities to let them know about the threats. Then she called Constable Tom Paton, on shift at the time, to let him know as well. Tom came to Bissell Centre to talk with the staff member, to get a description of the individual and more details of the threats. The next day to he came back to check on the staff member's state of mind.

I would really like to say thank-you to our "beat cops". They make every attempt to work with Bissell Centre and the people who come to it. I continue to be fortunate in my life to be surrounded by people I can count on and work with.

Carolyn Cush
Manager of ECSS
Bissell Centre

EDITORIAL E

Editorial writers ... enter
after battle and shoot the
wounded.

NEIL E GOLDSCHMIDT

The **computer** is only a fast idiot, it has no imagination; it cannot originate action. It is, and will remain, only a tool to man.

ON UNIVAC COMPUTER
exhibited at the 1964
NY World's Fair



Byte me!

The internet is fun and informative. If you are as opinionated as I am, you cannot surf for very long without developing an itch to toss your two cents into the mix. That means, learning how to set up a website. That is what I have been learning to do for the last couple of months. In the process I have encountered first-hand some of the marketplace politics involved in computer program design.

The project I undertook as a learning tool was to put together a website with photos from the Grade 9 reunion I attended in September. Pretty simple -- a bunch of photos of people having fun, a few lines of text to link the images together, an electronic scrap book. So I got to work in Photoshop. I trained in Photoshop 3 so getting up to speed in Photoshop 6 was a bit of a challenge. Photoshop at least has the decency to leave its basic tool sets in the same place on its interface in version after version. The stuff I learned in 3 still worked and it was just a matter of trial and error to find out what all the new commands did. So I happily cropped, adjusted, and designed away till I had some nice pages, which I sliced up into website friendly chunks. For the bulk of the photos, I used a handy-dandy automated feature to turn them into little split-frame slideshows for each person who contributed photos. My browser opened everything easily; I thought I was set to go. That's when I started encountering the politics of the marketplace.

Roadblock 1

I'm an internet cable customer with Shaw - love that broadband speed! Shaw advertises that its e-mail users can have up to seven e-mail addresses, with a ten-meg website for each address with their cable service. That's seventy megabytes; you could publish an encyclopedia on their site. They advertise this feature all over their web pages. I activated one site. Do you think I could find any place

where I could start uploading files? Not a chance. Round and round in circles I went looking for where I could print my files to their server. If anyone out there actually has a Shaw website I would sure like to find out how you got in. Finally the person who was helping me said: 'This is just foolish. There are free websites out there -- let's get one.'

Free is kind of a relative term. I got into a server, but the price was to have advertising on each page. Pretty tacky, but at least I didn't have to shell out any cash. I do not have any kind of credit card so internet purchases of any kind are just undoable for me. So the deal with this server is that you have to use FrontPage, Microsoft's web-authoring software to mount your web.

Roadblock 2

I try to load my Photoshop generated html (browser instructions). FrontPage does not want to accept html from competing companies or changes it to fit into its own version of what it thinks you want to do. So all my sliced up pages come out with spaces around each portion of the image, like a patchwork quilt. Ugh! ImageReady, the program I sliced them in, is a graphics program. Graphics programs know that people sometimes want to butt images mounted in columns right up against each other to make bigger images. FrontPage is a word processing program. Word processing programs leave default spaces between cells in columns so that the text that is supposed to be in them won't run together and get messy. And FrontPage didn't want me trying to override that default. I don't care how easy people say html is to learn, it's all gibberish to me; I find myself in there trying to get rid of any references to columns or tables so I can just move my images where I want them to go manually.

Roadblock 3

My pages are opening, my browser informs me, "but with errors on the page", and none of the hyperlinks that let you move from page to page are working. As a matter of fact, every cell with a hyperlink has an ugly blue boarder around it. Ugh again! I keep opening up everything I can find with FrontPage and inspecting the html. Finally I find the server instructions for printing advertising on each page and discover there is a java script error in that. If html is Greek to me, well java is Turkish, equally inaccessible. So I get rid of the on-page advertising, opt for pop-ups and get rid of that error. I get rid of all the ugly blue boarders, my main pages are opening nicely, a little slow, but I know how to slice them up into even smaller chunks if I want to. So now, on to those slideshows.

Roadblock 4

FrontPage breaks all the hyperlinks Photoshop put in to link thumbnails, images and pages in my slideshows. As I write this I have one more idea I am going to try to get those slideshows working and if that doesn't work I am going to throw out all those thumbnails and just set up links so people can click from page to page and then go back home to the page they started out from. Enough pissing around. Needless to say, I am never going to use Frontpage again.

This is where the politics of the marketplace come into play. FrontPage has become the industry standard. Servers like it. Some of them give you two choices: use FrontPage or write your own browser instructions. Yeah! FrontPage is very proprietary, it doesn't support input from other companies' design programs. It serves the needs of the word processing end of things very nicely, but doesn't support graphics worth a darn. I'm a graphics designer. The only other Microsoft product I use is Windows. I do all my text generating in WordPad, the bare-bones essence of Word 6, which comes free with Windows. If I want to do something more sophisticated with text I put it into Quark, a lovely, efficient, SMALL, assembly program - the favorite of printers. FrontPage and Office are horribly bloated, very intru-

This is the gift-giving season. Do your friends, family and the world a favour--boycott Microsoft!

sive programs. They print hidden files all over your private space the way Windows prints hidden files all over your system space. Is there any spyware in all those files?

I upgraded from a two-gig drive to a ten last year, and I'm running out of space again. Anybody out there getting any sense of conspiracy out of all this? Or is this just good business practice? Block the competition everywhere you can. Force customers to buy more and more hardware to mount applications full of stuff they are never going to need. Don't bother with your own product testing. Just market cheap "beta" versions and wait for the complaints to come in. When you do get the bugs fixed crank up the price for the "alpha" versions which will actually work.. Do these kind of tactics bother anyone, or am I just looking for a business ethic that doesn't exist anymore? Is there any way to fight back?

I HAVE AN IDEA! This is the gift-giving season. Do your friends, family and the world a favour, boycott Microsoft!

I do hate that learning curve to use new systems and programs, but my next operating system is going to be Unix, just for the sheer pleasure of getting some more of Microsoft out of my life. Merry Christmas everybody.

Theresa McBryan

Got a cigarette?
I'm short a quarter for
a Colt 45
Can I stay with you?
Got any small change?
Dollar got a dollar?
I'm short of money for
a room for the night.
I need a coffee- will
you buy me one?
Say mister can
you help me?
Rattle, rattle, rattle
the sound of a coin
in a can.
Shake, shake, lady can
you help me?
Can I sit in here for
a while to get warm?
Shuffle, shuffle the sound
of worn dirty runners.
Squeak, squeak the sound
of the wheels of a
grocery cart.
These are the sounds of
the homeless, day after day.

Betty Nordin

I had the honor of reading a poem at the book launch of my friend's new poetry book. It was one of those times where a simple gesture had me thinking about where I come from. The poem I read was about life on the streets. Before I begin I would like to thank Betty for giving me permission to use her poem in my story, and for helping to save my life.

Living on the street was life for me because I had nothing to look forward to. It began after I came to Alberta for my sister's funeral. She died from OD-ing on drugs in a hotel on Vancouver's Hastings Street. The whole incident left me thinking about my own life and where I was going to go after the funeral. I decided at the time to just live life the way I wanted and take my chances. The biggest chance was drinking -- any kind of drink that had alcohol in it -- not caring what happened to me afterward. There were times of sobriety when I needed a rest so I would go into a detox for a while. After feeling better the drinking would continue -- each time worse than before. The drinking sessions lasted for months at a time and the hangovers were nothing to feel proud of while praying to the porcelain gods.

I slept outside for months to show people I could do whatever I wanted and that booze was not the problem. It was everyone else's fault because I couldn't stand the truth about how I really was. Alcohol took total control until it almost killed me. The way I fed my habit many times was panhandling or stealing from my friends. If something was not securely locked it would be gone really quick. Many times I got into trouble with the law and with other people who were looking for me for their stolen stuff. The law and many people got to know me through my bad habits. The trust level was non-existent and respect was nowhere to be found. I've stayed



at the Spady for many nights so I wouldn't freeze to death or because I just needed a rest.

Looking back now, I can't believe I did all the things I did. Plus, in my seven years on the street, I had nothing but the clothes on my back. Now I have a full-time job, a nice apartment I share with my girlfriend and our cat, food to eat that I paid for, and I advocate whenever I can for the poor and the homeless. I'm frustrated by the way the government wants to dust these people under the rug.

The whole issue of homelessness is the most important to me because I was there for many years. It seems to me there is so much talk but nobody does a friggen thing about it. This poem says it for me and I was so touched that a friend asked me to read one of her poems. Nobody wanted me around before and now it seems people are coming to me talk to others about certain issues. I

practice One Day AT A Time with my alcohol problem because I never want to go back to the life I used to live. I have come full circle and my heart has softened in the last few years.

The river of life is forever flowing towards a better day. I have gained respect from many people who I hurt and the police have treated me with respect also. Not bad for a guy who decided to put away the bottle and change a few things in his life. The Red Road is getting less bumpy to travel and the days are a lot clearer since I decided to give it a rest with booze. The only things I have to say to the person who is trying to quit is: 'Believe in yourself' and 'use the Creator as a guide'. The Creator is one person that will never let you down and He will be there for you. All you have to do is pray from the heart and ask for help.

Len Blackfox Martial

RIVER R

Man has made a sewer of the river -- and spanned it with a poem.

ANDY ROONEY

On completion of world's longest suspension span, the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge linking Brooklyn and Staten Island, Time 11 Jul 69

Straddling the Fence

With the launch of her third poetry book, inner city poet Betty Nordin has come full circle. Her latest book, *Straddling the Fence*, is about finding balance in her life, a balance that for Nordin has been hard won. In her struggle to leave street life behind, a life that included addiction to drugs and alcohol, and prostitution, she fell down many times, but she made it with a lot of support from key people in her life and from her friends.

At the book launch at Alex Taylor School, Nordin asked friends to participate by selecting and reading poems. When Officer Pudwell of the Edmonton Police Service read, she said: "I never thought I'd be sitting in the same room as a police officer, yet here I am."

Pudwell responded: "I'm the one that's been blessed by her."

Kate Quinn, who works with the Prostitution Action and Awareness Foundation of Edmonton (PAAFE), read Nordin's poem dedicated to the women who were murdered at the Pickton pig farm outside Vancouver.

She said: "Three years ago Betty and I were talking about all of those who lost their lives through involvement in prostitution. We started the first memorial for these women." The memorials have become an annual event.

Michael Walters, former Editor of Our

Voice, spoke about taking Betty to Cold Lake to speak to a high school class about street life. "The teacher who invited us won the teacher of the year award because of that presentation. Betty spoke to those kids for about forty-five minutes. And they listened."

For Nordin street life began when she was a teenager. She and her sister Marge were adopted and raised on a farm near High Prairie. Nordin said it was a "pretty good life." Then, when Nordin was 16, a neighbourhood boy raped her. Afraid to tell anyone, she became really sick, and wound up in Alberta Hospital for six months with a nervous breakdown.

"I had so much anger. I just kept stuffing it inside. I wouldn't talk to anyone," she said. "I married at 19 to a man I didn't want to marry. The marriage was a big mistake. The only good thing is I had two beautiful children."

Nordin left her children behind when the marriage ended because she thought her husband could offer them a better life on the farm than she could. She came to Edmonton and ended up on the street.

"Everything went out of control. I had so much anger in me. I thought I could drink and drown the anger. I went downhill fast. I couldn't keep a job or an apartment."

From alcohol, she got into drugs -- heroin, cocaine and T's and R's (often called poor man's heroin). To pay for drugs, she

got into prostitution. In 1986, she wound up drinking and shooting up with a guy for a week. He had stolen some credit cards, and they went on a shoplifting spree.

"When I got back, the cops were all around. It was then, with my face in the dirt that I realized I had to get out. If I didn't I would die."

Nordin was charged with possession of a stolen credit card and put on probation. Through this experience, she met two of the women who were to help her change her life -- the counsellor at Exodus House, a safe house for prostitutes, and her probational officer. With their support, she started dealing with her anger, and she went to take upgrading in school.

"I had a grade three. Everyone always said I was stupid, but I'm not stupid," said Nordin, who has now completed high school.

Mary Burlie, who worked at the Boyle Street Co-op until her death a few years ago, was another source of strength for Nordin. "She said I wasn't a hopeless case -- there was hope for me. I was very lucky to have her."

Nordin dedicated her first book of poetry to Mary Burlie. "The message of the first book was that it's not easy to come off the street. You have to make the decision yourself, and you need a good support group."

Nordin's second book, *Phoenix*, was about the learning process involved in com-

ing off the street. "You have to go from the ground up -- to take baby steps. You come off the street and these things are alien to you. You have to learn to pay rent, to wash laundry, to budget, to cook, banking -- it's a learning process. Even today it's still a learning process."

With Nordin's third book, she has finally achieved balance in her life and with balance the courage to speak about her past involvement in prostitution.

"At the beginning I was very protective of letting anyone find out I had been a prostitute. I talked to Kate Quinn about it and she was very agreeable. I knew I had to share."

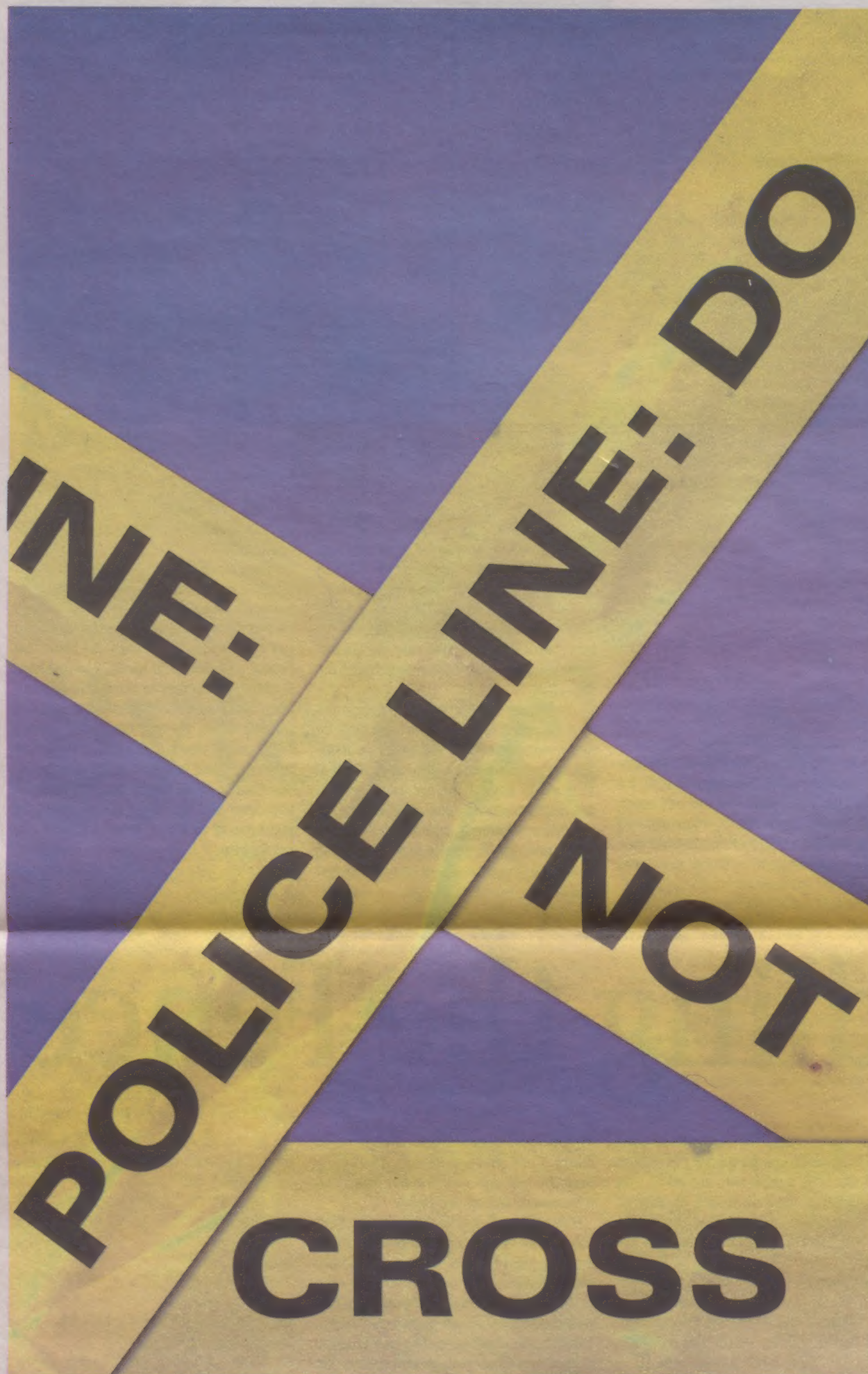
Even though Nordin suffers from rheumatoid arthritis, she said: "I may have rheumatoid arthritis, but I don't have arthritis of the brain. I can write books. I can talk to people. I still can carry a message."

And Nordin is continuing to bring the message, a message of hope to those still on the street. On November 22nd, she shared her poetry at the rally put on by the Edmonton Coalition on Housing and Homelessness. Her latest poetry book is available through Our Voice vendors. She also has posters for sale through Our Voice and PAAFE.

Linda Dumont

I'm not against the police;
I'm just afraid of them.

ALFRED HITCHCOCK



Interview with David Finlay, Chair of Edmonton's Police Commission

The Edmonton Police Commission is a public body with a governance role in the oversight of the Edmonton Police Service. Its responsibilities as set out in the Police Act include: establishing broad policies for the police service, presenting the budget to city council and allocating funds approved by council, issuing policy instructions to the Chief of Police, hiring the Chief of Police, working with the service to establish priorities, monitoring complaint handling and discipline by the

Chief, and dealing with complaints about policies and police service, and handling complaints about the Chief.

David Finlay, an Edmonton lawyer, is the current Chair of Edmonton's Police Commission.

OV: I would like to start with the article from November's *Our Voice*. Because I was the member of the public to which Detective Pick communicated his belief that there is a strategy by certain lawyers to bog down the Internal Affairs complaints system, I am concerned that there is an obvious bias in Internal Affairs. Annette Bidniak, a spokesperson for the Edmonton Police Service confirmed, and in quite strong language, that there is a distrust of certain unnamed lawyers, and a very firm belief that complaints are being filed frivolously.

That allegation jeopardizes the integrity of the Internal Affairs office. There is no

opportunity for the lawyers they are referring to to defend themselves, because they remain unnamed. Also, if you are a lawyer approaching Internal Affairs with a complaint, you don't know...did they mean you? Is your client going to get a fair hearing? It's a fairly serious allegation by the Police Department.

Given that, I think the fact that it was brought up at the Police Commission meeting was good, but to me the responses of the Chief were very dismissive, and very weak. Apparently he hadn't even spoken to Detective Pick or Annette Bidniak after reading the article to check out whether or not they did, in fact, make those allegations, whether or not they were going to stand by what they said, or whether or not there would be some follow-up around those specific allegations.

I would think that the next step should be, either they are prepared to name the

lawyers they're talking about, and the complaints they believe are frivolous, to give some chance for whoever it is to defend themselves. Or to clear up the apparent bias against lawyers filing complaints.

So, you, as the Chair of the Police Commission, should have some interest in how that's unfolding within the Police Department.

Finlay: I guess I'm not sure I want to deal with the opinion of some police officers or Annette Bidniak that certain lawyers are bogging down the system. I don't know that, so that's not something I can really talk about.

OV: But the point is that Internal Affairs officers have that opinion. That's where the bias is occurring, right in Internal Affairs with detectives who are responsible for investigating complaints. It's not whether or not the opinion is correct, it's that they have that opinion and they are responsible for investigating complaints.

Finlay: Right. I think that the remarks probably express some frustration on the workload that Internal Affairs has. That's been a concern to the Commission for a number of years. We need to get more resources in Internal Affairs; I think they're overworked, not as fast as we would like them to be in terms of investigating complaints and getting them resolved.

OV: So the fact that they're placing, or at least one Internal Affairs officer and a spokesperson for EPS, is placing responsibility for that with certain lawyers....

Finlay: No, I don't think they are doing that. I don't think they're placing responsibility for the Internal Affairs backlog on a couple of lawyers. We haven't seen any evidence of that. That lawyers are bogging down the system. We wouldn't agree with that. And I think at the last meeting, you heard the Chief not agreeing with that.

OV: OK. That's good that you wouldn't agree with that, and that the Chief wouldn't agree with that. The fact remains, though, that that is a belief in Internal Affairs.

Finlay: I think you have to look at how that bias is manifested, how that bias comes out, and if the investigations that are launched by lawyers on behalf of clients are investigated and dealt with in the regular course of dealing with complaints and that there's no indication that the complaint was dealt with any differently than any other complaint, the bias isn't there.

OV: ...the bias isn't there? Or are you saying that the bias isn't affecting the work. Because the bias is there on the part of two people, one of them a spokesperson for the department. The bias is there. They have said that.

Finlay: The opinion is there. Annette Bidniak has nothing to do with Internal Affairs.

OV: She is a spokesperson for the Department as a whole. So obviously if she is coming out with a statement, quite firmly, that she is prepared to stand behind, it's coming from some source of information, some discussions, it's not coming out of thin air.

Finlay: Yes. No. I'd be concerned about that.

OV: So would I, actually. I guess what this conversation brings me to is a further concern and maybe a broader concern about

COP TALK



the role of the Police Commission: that in Edmonton, the Police Commission has become more an apologist for the Police Department rather than speaking for the public or monitoring the Police Department on behalf of the public.

Finlay: I just finished saying that it's unfortunate that Annette Bidniak would have that opinion, that the Commission doesn't have that opinion. We're certainly saying that the Commission doesn't have that opinion. I think all I've done is indicate what the Chief said in the last meeting, as a result of your questioning. And I think what else I've said is when you talk about bias in a Department we need to understand what the effect of that bias is. You don't have anything to indicate that, if that bias exists, it has no effect on the way Internal investigations are handled, then that is significant in terms of that bias.

OV: Would you say, though, as far as public confidence in the objectivity of Internal Affairs officers, and as far as public perception of a lack of bias with Internal Affairs, this is actually a dangerous situation? I would think that the Edmonton Police Commission should have serious concerns that the public, at least, can perceive some objectivity, some fairness in the process. I don't think that the burden of proof should be on the people filing complaints, after the fact, to prove that a bias affected the investigation. You are responsible for maintaining some sort of public confidence in the process.

Finlay: I absolutely agree with you. We want the public to know and we want the public to be assured that there is an effective complaint process within the Edmonton Police Service. It's of interest to us that the public is aware that that system exists and whether they file a complaint themselves or whether a lawyer files for them, that that complaint will be investigated thoroughly and fairly.

That's absolutely something we want to ensure.

OV: And how is that possible now?

Finlay: It's possible now by getting some assurance from the police service that a bias does not exist and, I guess that all we can do is get their assurance, whether a person files a complaint through a lawyer or by themselves, the complaint will be dealt with fairly.

OV: And if the Chief of Police, which he did at the meeting, assured you that there was no bias, would that be sufficient for you?

Finlay: I don't know about sufficient. I guess we have to look at our options at that point and see what ... You're saying if we don't believe the Chief, what's our next step?

OV: It's not a case of believing or not believing the Chief, it's a case of what the Chief is saying is in direct conflict with what members of his force are saying.

Finlay: Right, so we would expect the Chief to ensure that the bias does not exist, that the opinion expressed is not a view held by the Internal Affairs department. And we would expect him to take steps to ensure...

OV: You would agree that there should be an expectation that he would take steps to address this.

Finlay: There is an expectation that he would take steps to ensure that complaints are handled the same way whether they're filed by a lawyer or filed by an individual.

OV: But in this specific case it has come to light that certain members of EPS believe complaints filed by certain lawyers are frivolous. So that's the situation right now.

Finlay: So I would expect him to deal with that, talk to those people, and be able to assure us, and you, that complaints are going to be dealt with fairly.

OV: Would you expect him to do that publicly?

Finlay: Well, it's something we can ask him at the next meeting, and we would be prepared to do that.

Natasha Laurence

Next month Part 2

"We would expect the Chief to ensure that the bias does not exist, that the opinion expressed is not a view held by the Internal Affairs department. And we would expect him to take steps to ensure..."

David Finlay,
Chair of Edmonton's Police Commission

Consider this. You awake one morning to realize that you have nothing. Through bank error, financial idiocy, thievery, mental breakdown, nuclear winter or extraterrestrial-induced amnesia, everything of monetary worth in your life is gone. All you have left are physical tools, mammalian survival instincts and a jungle of city to draw sustenance from. If you find yourself in this position, there are several things you should focus on in order to make your stay more comfortable.

You already possess, ingrained in your genetic make-up, a natural benevolence that civilized society has helped you suppress. If you can ignore the "better-offs" yelling things at you like "Get a job," you will find your visit quite enjoyable. Let's look at this from an amateur zoologist's viewpoint.

Philosophy

This is not a **jungle** war, but a struggle for freedom on every front of human activity.

LYNDON BAINES JOHNSON

The unarguable requirements for the survival of the human animal are shelter, water, food, and social interaction with those of the same or similar species. Survival on city streets depends on whether the "survivee" can give up certain wants in order to live a somewhat normal life. Forget about vanity. It's a weight you do not need to carry. If you are an addict or a junkie, you must beat your monkey. You know what I mean. You cannot focus on keeping yourself healthy and alive if you are constantly trying to "find" money to buy your burden; all your daily effort will be in vain. These aforementioned needs are mostly physical needs, but the first, and the most important, is related to both physical and emotional survival.

Shelter

The need for shelter is relevant to our physical health, keeping us dry and protected; while at the same time, a place to call home keeps us mentally secure. We all need a place to store our collection of shiny rocks, a place to sleep, to clean, to hatch plots, and to make dandelion beer. This can be any structure that will cover your head, although, on city streets, you might find it hard to find permanent residency. Cops seem to frown upon transients setting up shop where tourists might see you; try the outskirts of town. You can make the journey inward for supplies or dramatic ritual speeches.

Your brain needs it as much as your social life does. You need somewhere you can bring the things you have found a use for - things that make your existence relevant. If you are going to spend a lot of time living in the city, or should I say, living off the city proper, you need to get somewhat out of it and make a nest. Out of the way is the focus. Build a small "Thing" with whatever you can find - something that you can stand up in - a small room of sorts. This might seem difficult but there are thousands of things around that can act like a pole, which, when leaned against something else or other poles, can have other things laid on top of it, such as boards from dumpsters or the plastic sheets I see laying everywhere. At first you just need something to keep you out of the rain; you can



Illustration: Pieter de Vos

Urban Jungle

elaborate on this when you have the time or the means. Your sleeping area should have a mat or something that acts as a barrier between you and the ground. Cardboard, if piled properly, does a good job. On top of this pseudo-mattress, you should have a sleeping bag. If you can't find one, a garbage bag full of leaves works pretty well. Try to get your hands on a sleeping bag, though.

Clothing

It's winter and you're cold. The first thing to consider is your feet. The farther your feet are from the ground, the warmer they will be. I'm not talking about stilts, but big boots with high soles that are somewhat waterproof. Also, back at the ranch, you should have another pair of shoes, so your boots don't rot from wear. This might sound like common sense, but we have been spoiled; we haven't had to survive in a while, gorging ourselves, as we do, on luxury and all that.

Your hands and fingers are second. Remember they are your only tools. Keep them in good shape for optimal performance. Frostbite can take a finger if you aren't paying attention.

You lose 80% of your body heat through your head. Find something suitable to wear or tie something around it until you do. Don't forget about your torso and upper legs; you can find old shirts, jackets, jeans, sweaters, socks, and underwear on the streets. All these things are out there. Clothes donation boxes are a gold mine. There are Goodwill stores all over the city and on many occasions I have seen bags of clothes sitting out front, ripe for the picking. There is no such thing as too many clothes. Remember, cities are built on the foundation of excess; there are usable assets everywhere you look; you just have to pay attention.

Try to stay away from cottons if you can. Anything synthetic or woolly will keep

you warm even when it is wet. Dress in layers and keep moving during the day; you will be warmer. Also, a body that has a full bladder burns a lot of calories to keep that urine warm. If you are really cold, relieve your bladder and that energy can be used to keep yourself warm. Urinate outside your clothes.

Food

We must protect our bodies from the cold and constantly keep our calorie intake high so our body has something to burn to keep us warm. Winter is the time of year to eat chocolate and grease (fuel for the body to consume), summer is the time to eat well: meaning greens and fruit (to hydrate the body and cool it). Extra layers of subcutaneous fat insulate our bodies while the calories are burnt off as energy. The less intake and insulation, the colder we are. It is that simple.

You're going to have to look to the garbage. I'm not talking about eating diapers for the protein in the plastic; be selective. You don't have to eat much to survive. If you look carefully, you can find what you need. Fruit is great, cabbage is great and sugar is great. Look for food; it comes in many forms. Most cities have outdoor markets that are perfect if you get a big jacket, work on your hand-eye coordination, and remember to run like hell.

I cannot be very descriptive when it comes to finding food. There are too many variables involved. When in the woods, you could fish or hunt or both. In the city, you can scrounge, and maybe focus on several hot spots. If you find areas that have a consistent food stash, keep it to yourself. If all else fails just remember that the Donner Party lived off leather shoelaces for a while...

Water

You are going to need a pot and the means to make a fire (paper, dry wood, lighter/matches/proton accelerator). Find water of any sort. Fill several water bottles (any bottle on the ground will do) and take them back to your hut. Start a fire. Boil all the water. Then, if you want, you can wash those water bottles you found, and actually use them as water bottles. Start filling as many as you can and store water. You can never have enough. This is also good for washing, which leads us into our next topic.

Social Considerations

If you are dressed well you can spend most of your time hunting down food and water. This will also help in the social atmosphere that will be a constant thread throughout this "ordeal". Befriend people who aren't too needy of you. You have yourself to worry about first and foremost, but getting a high-five and a slap on the ass for a good joke keeps you in good spirits. There are always people doing worse than you. Also, on the colder nights, nothing beats snuggling up to another human, and if you are lucky, they might let you pass the time by touching your no-no spots.

If all else fails, pick up a copy of Machiavelli's "The Prince", read it like scripture, and do what you have to do. Survival is one part adaptation, one part willingness to lose in order to gain, and another part that is based completely on things that are so out of our control it is unfathomable.

Good luck.

Trent J. Wilkie

Trent Wilkie is a first-year journalism student at Grant MacEwan College. Also an outdoor professional, deemed an "expert" on survival and winter camping, he wrote this survival piece focusing on the streets.

If you're a ghost
then I want to be
haunted!

The two stars of "The Cat and
the Canary" find love and
laughter in a haunted house!

BOB HOPE

"THE GHOST BREAKERS"

RICHARD CARSON • PAULETTE GODDARD
ANTHONY QUINN • WILLIE HISS
Directed by GEORGE MARSHALL • Screen Play by Walter Belser
Based on a Play by Roy Cuckey and Charles H. Goddard



PAULETTE SETS BOB'S HEART A-DANCING WITH SOME VERY UN-GHOSTLIKE ROMANCING!

Monster Boys

It has been said that learning from the example of others is a wise and less painful path to knowledge. With that in mind I would like to share some of my experience dealing with landlords and building managers. I can't say that I have always been on the right side of the coin in these disputes but even when I was wrong I was learning.

I remember one of my landlords pleading with a judge during an eviction hearing. I believe he said something like: "They're not human, your honor. They're MONSTER-BOYS!" and looking back nearly twenty years, he was probably right.

When we didn't have the full rent, my roomies and I would resort to outrageous stunts to hold him off from collecting. Let me give you an example:

Al, my landlord, phoned to tell us he would be over after five on a Monday to pick up the rent. As this call was on a Friday I knew I had three days to come up with a plan to stall him. First I acquired a fish tank full of cockroaches from the U of A entomology lab,

including some of those four-inch-long Brazilian suckers. After "liberating" two 24's of beer from a Law Society party, I invited a bunch of my big skinhead and leather-and-chain-wearing punk rock friends over to drink them on Monday at four.

When they arrived, I handed them various kinds of clubs (hockey sticks, baseball bats, two by fours, etc.) and placed appropriate music on the stereo ("Let's Lynch the Landlord" by the Dead Kennedys, "Slumlord" by DOA, etc.).

When Al stepped into the foyer to collect the rent, my friend "Varmint" dumped the tank of cockroaches from around the corner sending a river of insects through the living room. As huge, drunken punks began tipping over furniture and swinging pieces of wood at the tide of repulsive insects, I told Al: "Sorry, they always migrate through at this time".

Al left without collecting the rent that day. Monster-boys, indeed.

Strangely, even after incidents such as this being entered into the court record, the judge gave us an extra 30 days to move out. I

learned then that it can be worth your while to fight an eviction notice, even if it is just to buy some extra time.

First off, being older and a bit wiser, I don't recommend trying to stay in a building where the manager or caretaker don't want you. Eventually they will get you out of the building and the remainder of your stay can be very stressful and unpleasant.

The point is that I was learning the ins-and-outs of landlord/tenant laws and regulations. Once, I lost a roommate and as I could not afford to pay the rent on my own, I looked for and found a new one. The resident manager, an old troll who had finally realized I was not interested in his sexual advances, decided he might get luckier with some other young boy. Chances were he would not approve a new roommate.

Under Section 21 of the Landlord and Tenant Act you have an option if this is the case.

If you notify your landlord or manager in writing that you plan to take in a boarder, a sub-leasee, if you will, he has to give you

valid reason in writing for his refusal to approve this. If he fails to do this within fourteen days of receipt of your letter, he or she is considered to have legally given his/her consent to the sublease. Your new roomie is even considered to be on the lease.

If you feel you have to be sneaky, many judges, though not all, will be lenient in what can be considered written notification. A cheque with the words "for my rent" written from your new roommate's account will often be enough. If your landlord is foolish enough to cash it, well 'Hallelujah', they're in and on the lease.

My last landlord was Don Fossum who owns several properties on Whyte Avenue. When Don served me my eviction notice, for whatever reason he wanted me gone, he had made a mistake on the document. I was accused of knowingly aiding someone to squat in the building.

Circumstances for my eviction notwithstanding, the statement that I knowingly aided this squatter was false. A legal document (and eviction notices are legal documents) has to be precisely worded. Since Don's wasn't and I didn't knowingly aid anyone, I decided to play for time under Section 26 of the Residential Tenancies Act.

This section of the act states (under Sub-section 3) that if you present your landlord with a written dispute over the eviction notice, the eviction notice is ineffective. Be careful. This is not the same as null and void; it merely means that the landlord has to give you your day in court to enforce it. Also, this has no bearing if you have failed to pay rent, and if the breach is a violation of your tenancy agreement, you may end up paying court costs to fight.

Don did not want to take me to court, and if I needed more time than 14 days to find a new residence, he made it clear that he was not going to follow due process of law. He was willing to let me stay longer if I paid an extra deposit, something I was not legally required to do.

Now unless he took me to court, he could not change the locks, throw my stuff out or in any other way forcibly evict me. Still I didn't want to remain there, so eventually we were able to come to an understanding.

If, after protesting in writing your eviction, a landlord does change the locks or removes your belongings from the property, they can be charged.

If you feel your landlord is a danger to yourself and your belongings, and moving immediately is not possible, you do have another option. It's risky and, depending on the sympathies of the judge, you might not win but you can take him to Small Claims Court. The legal ground for the suit is the cost of wrongful eviction.

Small Claims Court charges \$100 to file your claim but if you win you will be awarded this back. If the judge agrees that you and your belongings were in jeopardy you can sue your landlord and caretaker for 1) the cost of moving (movers, truck rental, etc.), 2) the cost of storing your belongings, 3) the cost of shelter until a new residence can be established, 4) Any costs for hook-ups (power, phone, etc.) at your new residence. If you have to take action this severe, chances are you will have to sue for your damage deposit as well.

If you win collecting your judgment may be difficult and this is another story entirely.

Remember, just because someone owns a building doesn't mean they either know or follow their legal responsibilities. Most landlords just become used to pushing tenants around. Before following any of this advice I suggest talking with someone at the Landlord and Tenant Advisory Board or a lawyer.

So if you're facing eviction, research your rights. And try not to be a "monster-boy".

Dave Dutton-Fraser

MONSTER **M**

No **monster** vibration, no snake universe hallucinations. Many tiny jeweled violet flowers along the path of a living brook that looked like Blake's illustration for a canal in grassy Eden: huge Pacific watery shore, Orlovsky dancing naked like Shiva long-haired before giant green waves, titanic cliffs that Wordsworth mentioned in his own Sublime, great yellow sun veiled with mist hanging over the planet's oceanic horizon. No harm.

ALLEN GINSBERG

Letter, June 2, 1966, describing an LSD experience in Big Sur, California. *Paris Review* (Flushing, NY, Summer 1966).

POETRY:

Where Do You Go

Where do you go
From here
When all your dreams are gone
When pride has left you
Lies withered on the ground

Do you climb down
Into the pit
A hell as black as night
Throw all caution to the wind
Give up without a fight

Hang on to the bottle
Big Bear or Colt 45
Down it
'Till your soul has died

Wander down 96th street
As though in a daze
Searching
Combing each face
Wondering always
Is he friend or foe
Can he
Will she
Help me
To get that drink
That I need so
And on
It goes

Loretta Miskinack

Darkness

I've traveled through the valley
Of darkness
I've seen my soul
Stripped bare
Of kindness, goodness
Warmth and care
I've seen the darkness
Of lies
And deceit
I've seen fear and anger
Yet I could not weep

Through it all
I've struggled
I've stumbled
And fallen
But I always knew
I must go on

So I prayed
In my heart
I made a song
In praise of God
For it was always He
Who led me on

Even when I faltered
I could hear His voice
Deep in my heart
The song was always there
It led me through
The months of darkness
That I once knew

Now a song of hope
Lives in me
Of dreams rekindled
Of love reborn
For life in its splendor
Has touched my soul
Once more

Loretta Miskinack

Untitled

You're an Indian among the tribe
My skin is the same as
Yours. Why does it have to
Be red. Why don't we fight
Our enemies. Ourselves
Love is greater than hate
Wash the blood of our hands
Forever my friend

#1
You're an angel in my eyes
Your whisper is sweet as
Your tender touch holds nothing
But forever love not knowing
A gifting love shall not surrender
Upon my dreams to hold
My love for you forever

#2
A gentle breeze soars warm
Through the air searching for
A loving one to hold on to
With hearts together
As the wind flows with love
The wind slows down upon the
Clear blue sky. One star shines
Bright with the one I found
Love at last for I have found
The one I love now. Two stars
Shine there. Love together
Forever

#3
Winter is cold but never
Freezing my love for you
Because my love melts
For you

#4
Why do I write like this
Are my words meant to be
Like this not knowing how
Much love meant me to find
Guiding me and my thoughts
To open in such a meaningful way,
But to know hate ain't
Stronger than love.

#5
You are upon my lips
When your sweet smile shows
Your loving smile, what was
Meant to be. Your smile brings
Out all the love it was meant
To bring.

#6
I bring my cup to you
All it brings is sweet love
For you. Stirring sweet love
For you. Now I know sugar is sweet
But not as sweet as you.

Ceno

Patience

How great is the Lord to have patience with me.
His tenderness exudes over all that I see.
Touching me with a hand so gentle.
Shows me that I am worthy of his love.
I am so gentle.
I have all.
I am his servant.
He is my King.

I love God more than anything
But He has this vision of me as his sweet bride.
I'm not ready for Him to reside.
I struggle with my dress
I struggle with my veil.
Above all, I struggle with my smile.

Today I'm happy to be alive
But with tomorrow I might not be alive.
My Lord Jesus, take me in your arms with pride.
For I love you
And I don't want to die.

As I sigh, again,
I know I've got today and I won't worry too much about tomorrow.
Just take me in your arms and cuddle,
With all my aches and pains.

I know there is relief in sight,
Like a blind man lifted from his plight.
I can see the Lord.
All the good things in sight.

Tomorrow will come
I just have to have patience and live for today!

Marie Murchie

P POETRY

Poetry is the heaven of the working reason. **Poetry** is a divination of the spiritual in the things of sense—which expresses itself in the things of sense, and in a delight of sense. Metaphysics also pursues a spiritual prey, but metaphysics is engaged in abstract knowledge, while **poetry** quickens art. Metaphysics snatches at the spiritual in an idea, by the most abstract intellection; **poetry** reaches it in the flesh, by the very point of the sense sharpened through intelligence. Metaphysics enjoys its possession only in the retreats of the eternal regions, while **poetry** finds its own at every crossroad in the wanderings of the contingent and the singular. The more real the reality, the superreal (I would not give up this word to the Surrealists), the superreal which both seek, metaphysics must attain in the nature of things, while it suffices to **poetry** to touch it in any sign whatsoever. Metaphysics gives chase to essences and definitions, **poetry** to any flash of existence glittering by the way, and any reflection of an invisible order.

JACQUES MARITAIN



TRADING IN VIOLENCE

Let's talk about violence. Let's begin with a true story about violence. There is a wonderful street person whom we shall call Dee. Dee lives in Edmonton's inner city and is addicted to alcohol and solvent. Dee was confronted recently by three guys looking for trouble. One of them pulled out a long hunting knife and asked for Dee's sniffing rag. Because the blade was pointed directly at Dee's throat, there was nothing else for it but to acquiesce. At Dee's direction, the knife wielder took the rag from Dee's sleeve and was thinking happy thoughts of imminent sniff when Dee unleashed upon his sorry carcass. Dee took the knife and threw it onto the roof of a nearby building then proceeded to thrash the aggressor while the two accomplices ran away.

When I first heard this story, I really liked it. It made me wanna dance like James Brown. Part of me feels that our society today needs more stories like this; more stories of The Big Payback. There is sometimes an inclination to believe that, given the apparent low moral functioning in our age, control must be applied through other means. But then a higher reasoning faculty kicks in and points out that the use of violence as a means of social control can be a devilishly problematic strategy. There must be other solutions to resolving conflict aside from meeting violence with violence. The Parkland Institute provided a forum for discussion of

these alternatives at their annual fall conference entitled "Trading in Violence, Building for Peace: Challenging the Corporate State".

The corporate state reigns supreme in the United States of America. In the National Security Strategy - unveiled on September 20th, 2002 - George W. Bush declared the United States a formal empire. There are some who might regard this development as a strengthening of the bulwark for the preservation and extension of freedom and democracy in the world. They should think again. Presenter Steven Staples described the American government, military, and corporations as the "Iron Triangle". This extremely powerful alliance acts as a wedge to push through the globalization agenda while protecting multinational corporate interests. By allowing narrowly limited economic issues to define and inform domestic and foreign policy, the servants of these interests (i.e. politicians, right-wing think tanks and corporate lobby groups) have placed the United States - and indeed the world - on a precarious footing.

In the conference's keynote address Dr. Helen Caldicott of Australia provided a chilling insight into the extent of our grim situation when she explained why she thinks the world is closer now to nuclear war than it has been in decades. During the Eighties, when Reagan was heating up the Cold War, Caldicott met with the U.S. president to go over some of the perils of

nuclear war. Perhaps she got through to the man because toward the end of his term Reagan signed a non-proliferation nuclear arms treaty with the Soviet Union. It is fortunate that Reagan experienced this enlightenment because he and his cronies believed in Revelations, Armageddon and that the world is going to be consumed in fire. (Note: Driving experts agree that those at the wheel should look where they want to go, not at the ditch or else that is where they will end up.) At the risk of appearing to offer an ad hominem argument against the current Republican presidential administration, it seems relevant to point out that Dr. Caldicott clinically assesses George W. Bush as being of lower intelligence than was Ronald Reagan.

Right-wing Christian fundamentalists control the U.S. Republican party as well as the courts and with an ever-diminishing separation between church and state, Caldicott warns us Canadians that our "southern neighbour is getting itself into serious trouble." She criticizes Bush's push for a regime change in Iraq suggesting that Bush was no more democratically elected than Saddam Hussein and that perhaps it is time for a regime change in America. As a further example of the threat posed by the Bush administration, Dr. Caldicott points out that it is stacked with hawks from the military/industrial complex and the Heritage Foundation which she says is basically an advertising agency for Lockheed-Martin, one of America's largest defence contractors. These characters are making oodles of money while pursuing "Full Spectrum Dominance" for the United States. This "defence strategy" entails the ability to wage war in space and to wage war from space down to Earth. Upon an examination of the chief proponents of this strategy, one may understandably regard it simply as the American militarization and economic exploitation of space for corporate benefit (at the expense of the American taxpayer and world peace). However, it is unlikely that the effects of this strategy will be limited to the shareholder's return on investment. As one U.S. admiral said to Dr. Caldicott, "Helen, our mission is to destroy property and kill people." Cast in this light, we can understand why Dr. Caldicott concludes, "this is the most dangerous administration that America has ever had."

In the next presentation I attended, Cy Gonick did little to mitigate the gloomy imperialist picture that was emerging. He pointed out that overreach destroys empires and that Canada would be wise to strengthen our own sovereignty while reducing our association with America's imperialist policies. In response to a question of how to take control of state power, Gonick replied that there is no immediate prospect of positive, civically responsible state leadership. To compensate for this absence he recommended that citizens' movements step into the vanguard of opposition to state/corporate agendas and coalesce as a force to veto imperialist globalization initiatives.

A strong argument for an opposition movement can be found in Dennis Soron's presentation as part of the session entitled "Poverty, Social Inequality, and Economic Violence". Soron lays out a reconceptualization of violence as relating to neoliberalism and its challengers. Violence in this context is most commonly understood via the images of the "deviant" protesters clashing with riot police at anti-globalization demonstrations. The projection of these images through the (corporate) mainstream media is most often framed in a way as to undermine the articulation of

dissent by focusing on the illegitimacy of the violent conflict. The assumption of course is that the responsibility for the conflict lies solely with the protesters and has nothing to do with the established world order that the police have been employed to protect. Should this protection ever entail excessive force on behalf of the police, this is spun as random and isolated, completely unrelated to the "wider social structures, or the many coercive ways in which the dominant economic and political order is defended and preserved." Protesters - whether involved in violence at demonstrations or not - often "claim to be confronting a more diffuse form of violence, embedded in the routine workings of global capitalism." Soron believes that this is the case.

Our typical understanding of violence involves direct confrontation between individuals or small groups with at least one party harboring an intention to deliberately commit violence upon the other. As Soron points out though, this understanding fails to adequately explain certain forms of violence (harm, suffering and injury) "that are the impersonal or systematic consequence of institutions, policies, or of the basic underlying structures of society itself." The provided examples of this newly constructed notion of violence are cases of infant mortality, easily preventable diseases claiming thousands of people and death on the streets because of homelessness. These are examples in which violence is better defined "not as an intentional action, but as a willful lack of action: passively accepting inequitable and exploitative social conditions that result in harm and suffering, that deprive people of what they need to ensure their own safety, health and well-being, etc."

Showing a robust capacity for understatement, Soron points out that "the claim that the neoliberal project is underpinned by violence, enabled and reproduced by it, would not sit very well with its ardent apologists in the media and conservative think tanks." They would insist that their program necessitates the "rolling back of the state to give wider scope to the free market; supposedly a means of securing maximum freedom, choice and autonomy for all." The truth however is that "state activity is reoriented away from redistributive and social functions which moderate inequalities and shield people from the direct pressures of the market and towards punitive, regulative, disciplinary activities designed to maintain public order and preserve a profitable climate for trade and investment." This misappropriation of the role of the state in the defense and extension of existing inequalities contributes to the "class war from above and the defense of the wealthy against the indignation of the poor and excluded."

Given the expanded definition of violence, Soron summarizes the root of the violence in the neoliberal project as "the effort to liberate private economic power from collective accountability and responsibility; to allow this power to operate irresponsibly and destructively, with fewer constraints, fewer social obligations, and less regard for the human suffering and environmental destruction that the obsessive pursuit of private profit brings in its wake."

It's a grim message, but one which we can be grateful to the Parkland Institute for making available to us... while we still have some time to act upon it.

Ron MacLellan

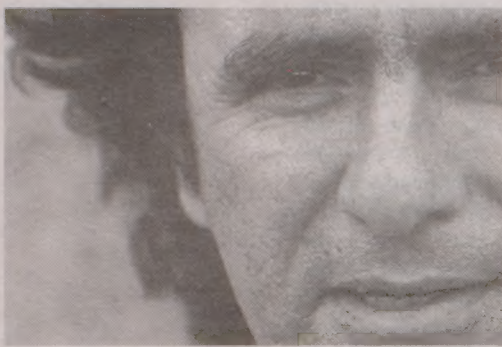
The author gratefully acknowledges the use of Dennis Soron's lecture notes in preparing this article.

VIOLENCE V

Violence can only be concealed by a lie, and the lie can only be maintained by violence. Any man who has once proclaimed violence as his method is inevitably forced to take the lie as his principle.

ALEXANDER SOLZHENITSYN

PEOPLE'S COLUMNIST



Painting Communities

One day, while walking over to one of my favorite Vietnamese inner city markets, Cho Hoa Binh Thuc Pham, I discovered a courageous and compassionate artist named Sharon Hazen conversing with Chai, the owner's son. She explained to him that she had one day taken a camera shot of this store's exterior and then decided to create a painting from it. There, in front of my very eyes, I could see this artist holding up a 22" x 30" oil on canvas illustration of this prominent store that sits on the northwest corner of 106th Avenue and 97th Street in Edmonton. The colorful painting was an accurate and realistic depiction of the store. I then noticed a crowd of about 10 Asian customers who, all of a sudden and out of nowhere, surrounded Sharon and the owner's son, enthusiastically pointing to Sharon's picture,

vocally complimenting the work of art in their foreign language. I was amazed to see how warmly Sharon was received by her admirers, as if she was immediately considered a member of this community.

The storeowner's son closely examined the art. As his face produced a wide smile, he looked over to one of his co-workers and acknowledged in his language how impressed he was by the colorful painting.

I then decided to ask this talented artist how she felt about the warm reception of her work. Sharon said, "Their praise is the validation that warms the heart of every artist".

It just goes to show what art and culture have in common. While bridging the gap between two very distinct cultures, it also eradicates the stigmas that are attached to people living in the inner city.

We certainly need more people like artist Sharon Hazen in this world to willingly reach out and extend a human hand of compassion; to be an example for those who judge the people of the inner city and need their eyes opened to overcome the real fear of looking inside themselves. No matter how established, we're all "equal" and we can learn from one another. Whether we are rich or poor and as much as the inner city needs the rest of the city as a moral example, the hidden treasures of the inner city are also needed by everyone.

Sharon's treasured art is a testament of that truth, which is what the true inner city is really all about.

John Zapantis



Sharon's art depiction of the store behind her

"We certainly need more people like artist Sharon Hazen in this world to willingly reach out and extend a human hand of compassion."



No, no, that's not it...it's like this.

In February's "Our Voice", I made the comment that last Christmas was the best Christmas in the last ten years. I know that Christmas can be really stressful and unhappy for many people, as I can attest to myself. I don't want pity as I think I was awash in self-pity long enough. Finally, I put my foot down and stamped it out of my system. There is a way of healing the wounds of life. After nine really bad Christmases, because of family deaths and illness, personal health problems and addiction issues, I was ready for a good one!

I had been volunteering at Bissell Centre with the summer programs and for Coats for Kids in the fall. I decided that I would help out at Christmas as well. Nestor and I were in charge of accepting gifts from people, helping them unload their cars, and moving them about the agency.

I was interacting a lot with donors, and I decided that I wouldn't have a negative look on my face. The emotion was going full tilt, so I went with it. It started off slowly and then snowballed into six different Christmas hats and Christmas-themed clothing. I had everything from a Santa's hat with bells to a set of decorated antlers. One even had some small bears attached to it.

I greeted young and old alike with a wide grin on my face and a sparkle in my eye. Once a grandmother, daughter and granddaughter came into the reception area with a donation. The grandmother was in a wheelchair. When the gifts were being put into my cart, she looked at me—staring really. Her bright blue eyes lit up like silver dollars and shone like diamonds. An early childhood memory must have resurfaced. She said, "Do you remember when I left out homemade cookies and milk for you and a carrot and twigs for Rudolph and the rest of your reindeer?" Bending over, I held her trembling hand and gave her a peck on the cheek.

A moist trickle of tears was flowing. I squeezed her hand gently. Daughter and granddaughter's eyes were a bit moist too. We said our goodbyes and thanks. Pushing the cart to the elevator, I was tingling throughout my whole body.

Once I was talking to a man whose parents had immigrated into Canada. Bissell Centre had helped out the family quite a bit. Since he was making a comfortable living, he was donating as much as possible. He doesn't want to see people with empty hands.

I also did a lot in Child Care with the kids. As anyone can attest, kids can be very cranky. I walked up to a bawling kid one day. His eyes went wide as saucers and I said, "Are they real tears or crocodile tears?" I took one of the little bears off my hat and gave it to the boy. "Thanks Santa", he said.

I got to be Santa at the Drop In Christmas party. My long beard made me perfect for the job. Still dressed as Santa, I was passing the Child Care when Fatima asked me to go in and see the kids. I ran in, rang my bell, yelled, "Ho Ho Ho," and ran out again. The chanting of "Santa Santa Santa", belted out. I went back in. Twenty kids surrounded me. A blonde-haired, freckled little tyke yells, "That's not Santa!" The others tell him it is. Another kid asked me, "How come your beard isn't really white?" I proceeded to explain that Mrs. Claus has made tomato macaroni soup. Rudolph and the other reindeer were itching to get off. In the commotion, I forgot to wash my beard. We went through the "Ho Ho Ho's" one more time. Just when I was at the door, one of the kids yells, "Hey Santa! There's a washroom in the hallway so you can clean your beard!"

These are some of the reasons why last Christmas was the best one ever!

Kevin Fox



My Big Fat Greek Appetite

Whenever I decide on going out for a good choice of food and interesting entertainment, it's the wonderful establishments like "Tra Amici", a licensed café and bar, that makes me feel like one of the boys.

Every time I walk through its doors, there, to my immediate right, are Bacio, Torrone and Pistaccio, better known as The Italian Connection. No...I'm not talking three heavies from Little Italy, but obviously the variety of Italian ice cream that sits innocently behind the display case when neighbourhood customers come inside to buy off these heavy favorites.

If it gets too cold outside and you just simply want to warm up, how about coming in for an Italian sausage and mushroom pizza slice, for the affordable \$2.50 a slice.

The prominent owner, Stan Cerra, has established a reputation for being the centre of contro-

versy when it comes to his diverse knowledge of soccer. Periodically, clients will come into his business to watch European soccer matches telecast on his six televisions, all hanging from the top of his business ceiling.

After the games are over and the coffee shop clients have finished watching their game, it's now usually time for owner Stan Cerra to put on his thinking cap as customers try to recap the game's past highlights, debating persistently and openly with Stan about why the Italians really lost to rival teams. This will happen quite commonly during the world cup matches, whenever or not Italy makes it to the semifinals.

Customers and Italian coffee lovers have turned Stan's "Tra Amici" into a Mecca for controversy, as you'll quite often find men of different races having coffee together while battling over why the opposition soccer teams could have played better.

These entertaining discussions, and more, may be witnessed as you sit down over a coffee, kicking up your feet while watching contentedly as this live entertainment emerges before your very eyes.

John Zapantis

EDMONTON

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VOM

VENDOR OF THE MONTH



Photo: John Zapantis

Michael

Michael's success as a productive Our Voice vendor has been an achievement in itself; but, his determination for fighting off killer diseases, such as HIV infection and Hepatitis C, has made him a winning example of how an Our Voice vendor is capable of championing the right to fit into society while battling the odds of survival.

Michael became an Our Voice vendor back on October 15, 1999. After trying to dry out from a drunken binge, he was checking into the George Spady Centre when he noticed an advertisement for Our Voice magazine on the centre's wall, saying positions for vendors were needed. He responded to the advertisement, applied for the position and has been selling the magazine ever since.

Michael was born in London, England, but lived in Toronto most of his life. He is the son of a chauffeur. His mother was employed as a book-keeper. He is the older of one brother.

He has an excellent 32 years of being employed in various areas of industry. Michael's life has also been a successful climb to the top of the business ladder. For 15 years, he operated and owned his own courier service but eventually lost the business because of stress and drug and alcohol dependency. Michael sought the support of Alcoholics Anonymous on July 26, 1999.

Our veteran Our Voice vendor has also run into an array of unfortunate circumstances. He contracted Hepatitis C through the sharing of needles while abusing drugs. Hepatitis is inflammation of the liver from any cause. Hepatitis C virus causes at least 80% of the hepatitis cases arising from blood transfusions, plus many scattered cases

of acute hepatitis. It is most commonly transmitted by injecting drug users who share needles. Sexual transmission is uncommon.

In 1998, Michael was diagnosed for having been infected by HIV, but he's not certain how he contracted the disease. HIV infection (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) is an infection by one of two viruses that progressively destroy white blood cells called lymphocytes, causing Acquired ImmunoDeficiency Syndrome (AIDS). The impaired immunity can also result in the contracting of other diseases. To this day, Michael continues to receive the moral support from two self-help organizations for both diseases here in the city.

Michael vends Our Voice for the pleasure of meeting interesting people and escaping the boredom and isolation of home. He says: "At first, it was mainly because I needed the money, which was hard because I was pushing myself all the time, 8 to 10 hours a day in minus 30 to 40 degree weather. I now go to get out to talk to people. It's better than sitting at home and feeling sorry for myself."

Michael would like to express his sincere Christmas greetings to work colleagues at Our Voice and the staff of the Bissell Centre. He says: "I'd like to wish everyone a Merry Christmas, especially Managing Editor, Natasha Laurence, who happens to be the Godmother of my daughter, and everyone connected to the Bissell Centre who helped out in different ways, and Our Voice Distribution Manager, Ron MacLellan. He helped me get winter boots. These things are greatly appreciated."

John Zapantis

"I now go to get out to talk to people. It's better than sitting at home and feeling sorry for myself."



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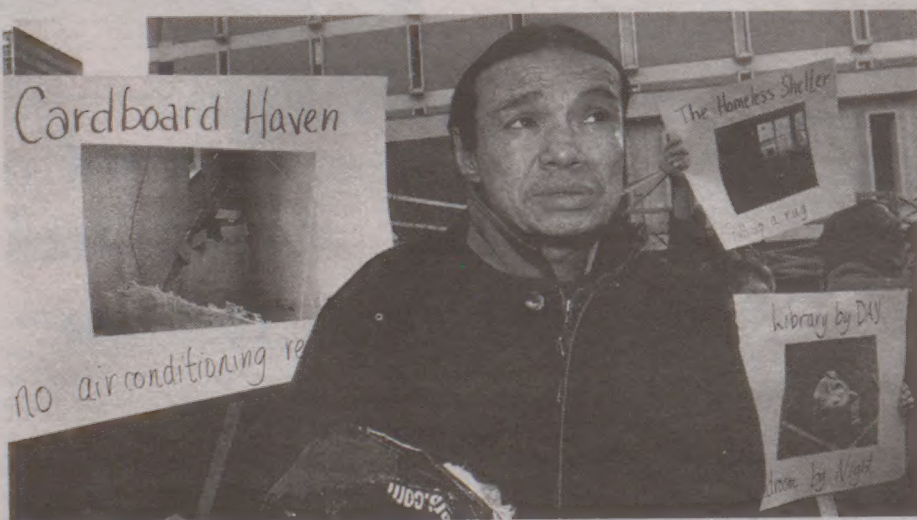


For me, the *child* is a veritable image of becoming, of possibility, poised to reach towards what is not yet, towards a growing that cannot be predetermined or prescribed.

- Maxine Greene

The 2003 OV Calendars

See your local vendor or call Ron @ 423-2285 Ext. 139



Home Sweet Home

On November 22nd, National Day of Housing and Homelessness, over one hundred people gathered outside the Stanley Milner Library to express their concern for people struggling with inadequate housing and homelessness. Edmonton singer/songwriter Terry Morrison hosted the event, organized by the Edmonton Coalition on Housing and Homelessness (ECHOH). Kent Fletcher of Capital Region Housing released the dismal figures from the latest Homeless Count (see page 2) and MLA Julius Jankowski, on behalf of Stan Woloshyn, accepted the postcards gathered during the three-month campaign, "There's no place like home." (see editorial, page 5). The vigil was part of a one-day conference, also sponsored by ECHOH, dedicated to exploring and learning about the issue of homelessness.

Veronica Peter, the young girl pictured on one of the postcards, gave a short speech she had prepared with the help of her mentor:

Hello, my name is Veronica. I just want to say that I wish houses were more affordable for people with less money. In my house in the downstairs living room, the heat doesn't work and my mom and baby brother are sick. So, if you could put some money into houses, it would make the world a better place.

By Veronica Peter
Age 10

Our Voice and ECHOH would like to thank the many people who participated in both the postcard campaign and the November 22nd conference and vigil. Together we can change to world!